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NOAA FOR NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE/INTERNATIONAL/BARRETT

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SUBJECT: Meteorology System Brings Israel, Palestinians, Jordan Together

1. Summary: An innovative Sandia Lab project in the Middle East called Sustainable Land Use has grown into a groundbreaking arrangement for sharing nearly real-time meteorological data between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan. End summary.

Meteorology System Builds on Earlier Land Use Project

2. Sandia Lab's Cooperative Monitoring Center (CMC) and its sister organization the Cooperative Monitoring Center - Amman brought representatives from Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and Israel together in Amman on November 30, to initiate and develop the Middle East Meteorological System (MEMS). The university professors representing Israel participated via telephone because their schedules made it impossible for them to come to Jordan. MEMS is an online, regional, meteorological data collection and exchange network that extends the 1999 Sandia Lab Sustainable Land Use project. Under the Sustainable Land Use project, there were two weather stations installed on the West Bank and two in Israel that transferred data to a server at Sandia in New Mexico, from whence the data were studied and shared by all the parties. The participants agreed on November 30 to bring in Jordan as a new partner, to expand to a total of eight sites, and to have CMC-Amman take on the role of project coordinator and network manager. Thus, the MEMS project now becomes a regional network of cooperative monitoring and data sharing. CMC-Amman's servers in Jordan will host the Internet-based MEMS database and website. CMC-Amman will develop and manage the website, database and network, conduct regional meetings and workshops on meteorology and related disciplines such as agronomy and ecology, coordinate projects, and seek to draw in new regional partners. The MEMS partners plan to meet again in the summer of 2005 at a place to be determined.

Jordan Joins MEMS, Represented by Ag Research Center

3. Jordan's National Center for Agriculture Research and Technology Transfer (NCARTT), part of the Ministry of Agriculture, will be the first Jordanian partner in MEMS. NCARTT will provide its data to CMC-Amman, which will post that data to the MEMS website. CMC-Amman will also integrate NCARTT's system of weather stations into the MEMS network, in the process upgrading those stations to match the capabilities of the stations already on-line in the West Bank and Israel.

Possible Partner: USDA Irrigation Management System

4. Ibrahim Shaqir, from USDA's Office of International Research Programs, briefed participants on the Middle East Regional Irrigation Management Information System (MERMIS), a possible partner with MEMS. MERMIS is funded by the Department of State, and developed and managed by the USDA Agriculture Research Service's Office of International Research Programs as part of the Middle East Peace Initiative. MERMIS is a cooperative regional project bringing together participants from Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and the United States. MERMIS aims at improving water management in the Middle East by developing a regional database system for dissemination of agro-meteorological information through installing automated weather stations and applying irrigation scheduling methodology in farmer's fields. Their website is www.mermis.org

5. COMMENT: MEMS is a solid example of practical cooperation driven by national interest, and shows that strategic thinking and long-term engagement by U.S. partners can contribute to the development of regional ties.

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